

## Asthma Does Not Have to Slow You Down\*

You can work with your doctor or health care provider to control your asthma and lead a normal life.

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease. It makes your lungs and airways swell, causing breathing problems. Like diabetes and high blood pressure, asthma is a chronic disease. This means that once you get asthma, you likely will have it for a long time or a lifetime. Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.

### How Asthma Makes You Feel

In 2007, more than 20 million people in the United States reported they had asthma. Today, this disease is affecting more and more people all over the world. Most people with asthma have one or more of these symptoms:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

Symptoms can vary from one time to another and in frequency. They can be mild, serious or life-threatening. Ask your doctor or health care provider to check out what's causing your symptoms if they last for several days.

### Asthma Triggers and How to Avoid Them

Some of the things that bring on asthma symptoms include:

- **Animals.** Keep pets with fur or feathers out of your home and especially out of your bedroom.
- **Dust mites:** You can find these tiny bugs in fabric-covered items in the home. Put your mattress and pillows in dust-proof covers, or wash your bedding in hot water each week.
- **Cockroaches:** Don't leave food out. Store food in closed containers.
- **Indoor mold:** Fix leaky faucets and pipes and use bleach to clean moldy surfaces.
- **Pollen and outdoor mold:** Pollen comes from weeds, trees and grass. Mold spore and pollen count is higher at certain times of the year. Limit outdoor activity when the pollen count is high. For the pollen count level in your area, please check the weather section of your local newspaper or the National Allergy Bureau, <http://www.aaaai.org/nab/>, a service of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.
- **Cigarettes:** Do not smoke and stay away from secondhand smoke as much as you can. Do not allow smoking in your home or in the car.



- **Strong odors:** Stay away from perfumes, sprays and paints. Avoid using a wood-burning stove, kerosene heater or fireplace.
- **Vacuumping:** Ask a family member to vacuum for you or wear a dust mask if you vacuum.
- **Cold air:** When you're out in cold weather, cover your mouth and nose with a scarf.
- **Exercise:** Everyone needs to exercise. But being active may trigger asthma symptoms. Ask your doctor what you can do before you work out to avoid symptoms, what exercises you should do, and how long you should work out.
- Find out what triggers your asthma symptoms.
- Know when your asthma is getting worse.
- Learn how to use a peak flow meter.
- Know signs of an emergency, what to do, and who to call.
- Speak up and be open with your doctor or health care provider. Make sure you understand what the doctor tells you by asking:
  - The same question again.
  - Someone else to write down instructions for you.
- Set up regular visits with your doctor or your health care provider. Make the most of each visit by:
  - Finding out if you are doing the right things to keep your asthma under control.
  - Asking about new ways that may improve your asthma control.

By learning to manage their disease, most people can expect to have few or no symptoms.

## What You Can Do to Control Your Asthma

Work with your doctor or health care provider to put together an asthma action plan. Your asthma action plan will help you:

- Know the steps to take to manage your asthma.
- Know what medicines to take, how much to take, and when to take each.

## We are here to help you.

To learn more, call MedCall or our Customer Care Center. You also can call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

### BlueChoice HealthPlan Medicaid

Customer Care Center: **1-866-781-5094**

TTY line: **1-866-773-9634**

MedCall®: **1-866-577-9710**

TTY line: **1-800-368-4424**

[www.bluechoicescmedicaid.com](http://www.bluechoicescmedicaid.com)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

**1-800-232-4636**

TTY lines are only for members with hearing and speech loss.



Medicaid

Source: \* National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, *So You Have Asthma*, March 2007 (Accessed November 2009): [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have\\_asthma.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have_asthma.pdf)

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